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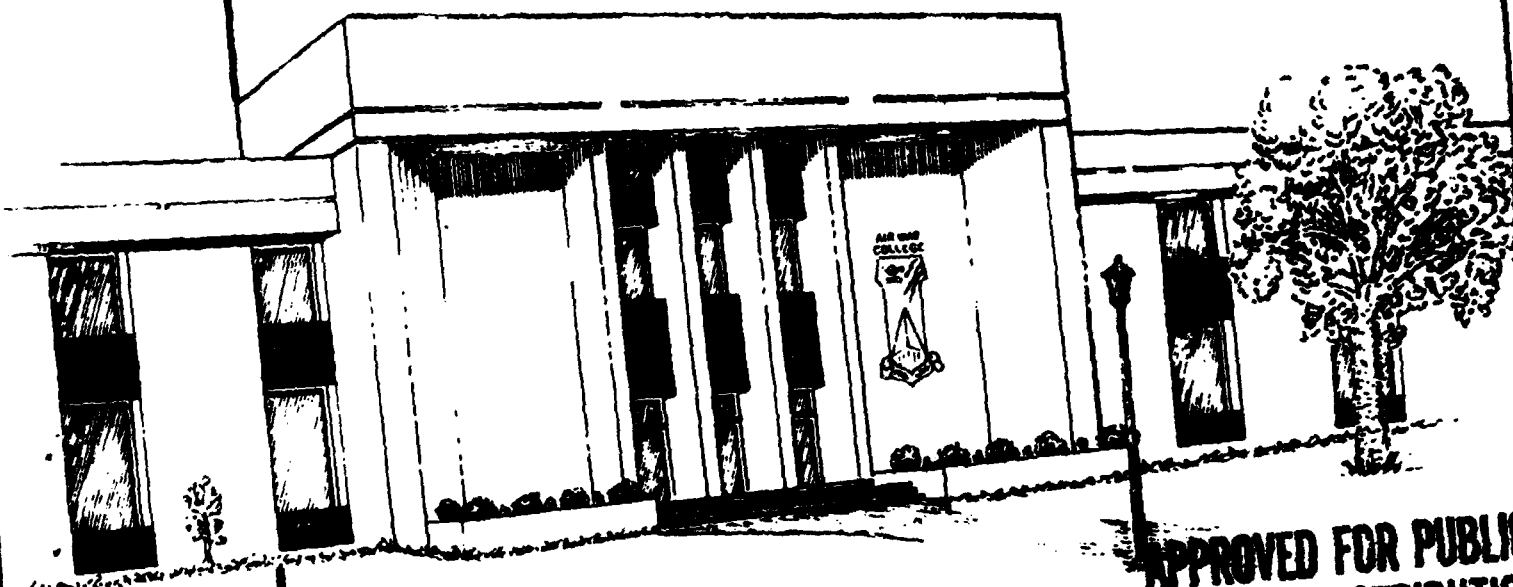
## RESEARCH REPORT

NATIONAL SECURITY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
AND THE MAJOR POWERS

COLONEL LEE, HAN HO

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AIR UNIVERSITY  
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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AIR UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL SECURITY FOR THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA  
AND THE MAJOR POWERS

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY  
IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE RESEARCH  
REQUIREMENT

Research Advisor: Dr David E. Albright

MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA

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# AIR WAR COLLEGE RESEARCH REPORT ABSTRACT

**TITLE:** National Security for the Republic of Korea  
and the Major Powers

**AUTHOR:** Lee, Han Ho, Colonel, Republic of Korea Air Force

The Korean peninsula was divided at the 38th parallel by the great powers in 1945, and Korea has become a key area of major powers (United States, USSR, Japan, and China) interaction. All the major powers in the contemporary international system have vital interests in the Korean peninsula. This peninsula is the only area in the world where these powers interact face-to-face. This report reviews the interactions of the major powers on the Korean peninsula and the military posture of both Koreas. And attempts to clarify Korea's position in the power relationship between those four big powers with focus on Korea's tasks in the future. (44)



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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Colonel Lee, Han Ho (BS, Korean Air Force Academy) entered F-86F flight training upon graduation from the Korean Air Force Academy in 1969. He has flown F-86 and F-4 fighters and has been assigned to operation staff positions at all levels of command. He attended the International Defense Management Course at Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California, in 1983. His most recent assignment before leaving Korea was commander of a T-37 flying training squadron. He is a graduate of the Air War College, class of 1988.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

It is almost axiomatic that the vicissitudes of all nations, small and large alike, can be understood in terms of three separate perspectives, their internal, external, and geopolitical environments.<sup>1</sup>

Like a running tricycle, the national security of the Republic of Korea (R.O.K.) is a three-wheeled problem, which cannot keep its balance if any one of the three wheels gets blocked. Consequently, any serious consideration of the overall security issues confronting South Korea requires a three-dimensional analysis. The first dimension deals with the problem of confrontation between North and South Korea. The second dimension concerns the dynamics and the direction of internal changes in South Korea in all aspects of its national life. The third dimension refers to the international environment surrounding Korea as well as the relationship between South Korea and foreign nations. These three dimensions have to be treated separately and analytically, but they also require a synthetic treatment in order to draw a coherent picture for the issues of national security.

It is an established practice in analyzing the problems of national security of any given country to attempt to find a linkage between its internal problems and its external relations. In the case of divided nations, however, the

confrontation between the divided parties has to be linked to the usual internal-external linkage. In fact, the security issues confronting South Korea are more volatile than is the case with other divided nations. In the case of Vietnam, the military victory by North Vietnam put an end to the division. In the case of Germany, the internal situations in the two German states as well as the European environment have achieved sufficient stability so that the security issues have become relatively moderate. In the case of China, the two sides differ so greatly in size and strength and the strait separating the two parties is sufficiently wide to make the dimension of confrontation much less serious.<sup>2</sup> With respect to Korea, however, all dimensions related to security issues are full of tensions and uncertainties. The confrontation between the two Koreas along the DMZ is perhaps the most dangerous in the world in terms of its high probability for outbreak of a large-scale war.

In light of these factors, this paper is divided into four parts: (1) an examination of the geopolitical context of Korea; (2) an analysis of how the interests of the major powers intersect and what kind of policies they pursue with regard to the Korean peninsula; (3) a discussion of the North-South confrontation and military environment; and (4) Korea's position in the power relationship between major powers.



## CHAPTER II

### OVERVIEW OF THE GEOPOLITICAL LOCATION OF KOREA

#### THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

Northeast Asia is receiving increasing attention as one of the most dynamic areas in the world. South Korea's growth record is very impressive, and Japan, despite some difficulties, is still growing faster than many western countries. Strong economic growth makes this part of the world important from both a Western and a Soviet point of view.<sup>1</sup>

The United States' trade with Asian countries has already exceeded that with European countries. The U.S.-Soviet arms race, changing Sino-Soviet relations, the U.S.-China relationship, the increasing role of Japan in defense, these issues demonstrate that Northeast Asia is an area of high priority.<sup>2</sup>

The Korean peninsula is a focal point where forces of the four big powers of the U.S., USSR, Japan, and China interact with each other. The strategic importance of Korea is often discussed in relation to the U.S.-Korea defense treaty of 1954 and also to the security of Japan. But, in evaluating the strategic significance of Korea, four points must be taken into account.

First, there is the geopolitical location of the peninsula. Placed at the heart of the four big powers, Korea has historically been an area of struggle for hegemony by the

U.S., USSR, China, and Japan. The Soviet Union and China share borders with Korea, and Japan is just off a narrow strait from the peninsula. Seoul and Tokyo are within two hours flight distance, while Seoul and Vladivostok are even closer.

Because of this fact, there have been four major wars on the peninsula in the past 100 years: the Sino-Japanese War, the Russo-Japanese War, World War II, and the Korean War. Each of the big powers was involved at least twice.

At this moment, three countries, U.S., USSR, and China, maintain military alliances with one or the other of the divided Koreas. Japan for her part has stated many times that the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula are vital to the security of Japan.<sup>3</sup> In case a war breaks out on the peninsula, the relationship between the U.S., USSR, China, and Japan will inevitably change. This consideration brings us to a clear appreciation of the strategic importance of the Korean peninsula.

Secondly, the strategic significance of the peninsula can be observed in relation to the mounting Soviet military capabilities. In the early 1960s, Soviet ground forces in the Far East included only 15 divisions, but they increased to 57 divisions in 1987.<sup>4</sup> The more than 40 tactical air regiments stationed there are receiving newer aircraft. The latest generation of interceptor aircraft are also entering the regional inventory. Backfire aircraft continue to

augment the older inventories of Badgers, and the Soviets are deploying modified Bear aircraft in areas from which they can support Far East operations. The Soviet Pacific Ocean fleet is the largest in the Soviet Navy. It contains two of the Soviet Union's three V/STOL aircraft carriers, over 80 major surface combatants, and more than 80 submarines. These conventional forces are supplemented by a substantial number of short- and intermediate-range nuclear forces, including the land-mobile SS-20.<sup>5</sup>

Also of importance is the fact that the Soviet Union constantly uses the Korean Strait as the main passage for advancing its Pacific fleet into that ocean. This poses a serious threat to the sea lines of communication of the West.

Third is the existence of increased tension and the potential for war on the Korean peninsula. With over 1.4 million highly trained and well-equipped standing forces deployed along the 155 miles of the DMZ, the peninsula is probably one of the most heavily armed areas in the world.

North Korea maintains the sixth largest armed force and the world's largest unconventional warfare forces. Approximately 800,000 men serve in the force. An ominous development has been the relocation of about 60 percent of its highly mobile army within close proximity of the DMZ. Warning times have been reduced accordingly.

North Korea spends more than 20 percent of its gross national product on the military. It also receives aid from

the Soviet Union. This aid has produced the MIG-23 and the SA-3 missile system for the North Korean inventory.<sup>6</sup>

Fourth is the development of Korea. Today's Korea is not the same as that of yesterday, and the Korea of the future will not be the same as that of today. South Korea's economy, with a 12.5 percent growth rate in 1986, is the most rapidly developing economy in the world.<sup>7</sup> The first peaceful transfer of executive political power on the peninsula and successful conclusion of the 24th Olympic Game in Seoul will firmly establish Korea as a major economic power and important member of the international community.<sup>8</sup> Korea was in the past a burden to friendly allies, but now it makes constructive contributions for peace and prosperity of the region.

#### DIVISION OF KOREA IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

As Korea is the victim of foreign policies of the neighboring big powers, Korean security can hardly be discussed without a review of historical perspective of division. The first reference to the future of Korea by the allies during World War II was made at the Cairo Conference in November 1943. The American, British, and Chinese governments issued a declaration stating: "The aforesaid three great powers, mindful of the enslavement of the people of Korea, are determined that in due course Korea shall become free and independent."<sup>9</sup>

On the basis of this Cairo Declaration and subsequent agreements by the major powers, Japan's control over Korea

was ended, and Korea regained its independence in the post-World War period. But the restoration of Korean sovereignty was only provisional. According to the agreement at Yalta in 1945, the Soviet Union was given the right to occupy the area north of the 38th parallel as a reward for Soviet entry into the War against Japan. At the same time, the area south of the 38th parallel was to become the American zone of occupation. Because of this wartime agreement between the United States and Russia, Korea was bisected into two separate zones of occupation.<sup>10</sup>

It was after the victory of the communist forces over the Nationalist forces in China in 1949 that the Soviet Union was emboldened to expand its communist empire in the Pacific. Stalin encouraged Kim Il Sung of North Korea to launch an all-out invasion against the South in June of 1950.<sup>11</sup> Korea was the first place where the cold war escalated into a "hot war" in the post-World War II era.

After the cessation of hostilities in 1953, the two Koreas chose opposite roads for their economic recovery and nation building. Today, North is known for its strict adherence to communist orthodoxy of the Stalinist variety; South Korea, for its unswerving anti-communist posture.<sup>12</sup>

From this glance at the Korean partition and subsequent fratricidal war, it is clear how the fate of this small power has been influenced by the struggle between an expansionist and a status quo power.

### CHAPTER III

#### POLICY OF THE MAJOR POWERS TOWARD KOREA

Korea stands as one of the most dramatic examples in world politics where geopolitics has so clearly and persistently controlled and affected its political fate throughout history. Surrounded by major powers, each equipped with aggressive and ambitious philosophies of expansion and control, and geographically situated astride the critically strategic areas to all interested parties, Korea has been inexorably intertwined against its will in all the conflicts of the various powers since the beginning of its existence.

Such were the backgrounds of Kublai Khan's invasion of Korea and his unsuccessful attempt to conquer Japan; Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea enroute to his conquest of China and beyond; and Ming China's military intervention against the Japanese on behalf of Korea. In more modern times, Korea fell victim to more intense international rivalries among the great powers--Imperial Russia, Meiji Japan, Ming China, British Empire, France and United States imperialistic policies, which sought supremacy over the peninsula.

Today, the Korean problem is wrapped in a quadruple tangle of the People's Republic of China, Japan, the United States, and the Soviet Union with numerous implications of the ever-entangling relations among these four powers; Korean

security can hardly be discussed without a review of what their policies toward Korea are.

#### U.S. POLICY TOWARD KOREA

The United States is Korea's most important ally, and it has certainly played a decisive role in the liberation, independence, war, rehabilitation, economic development, and deterrence and defense of Korea.<sup>1</sup> The policies of the United States in Northeast Asia are interrelated and a reflection of its larger global and regional concerns.

Broadly speaking, U.S. objectives are three-fold in nature. The first is to seek to end the impression of American ambivalence and vacillation in Asia. The Reagan administration has criticized the "zigzags," "inconsistencies," and general "undependability" of previous administrations. The second basic objective is to check Soviet expansionism. The third basic objective is to reassert American leadership in the region. Through revitalizing relations with key U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan and building expanded relations with nations like China, the United States seeks to substitute for the previous U.S. "retreat" and general policy of retrenchment a new, more activist approach throughout East Asia.<sup>2</sup>

This is immediately evident in the case of U.S. security policies toward South Korea. In the last few years, the United States has forcefully reaffirmed its defense commitment to Korea, including its nuclear umbrella; cancelled

plans to withdraw U.S. ground forces and moved to strengthen the American military presence both quantitatively and qualitatively; and maintained a forward deployment strategy to underline its commitment to Seoul's defense. At the same time, the United States has promised to rule out any bilateral discussions with North Korea unless South Korea is a full participant.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the American strategy for Northeast Asia can be characterized as one in which the United States wants to form a "United Front" with China in order to counter the growing Soviet influence in the region and elsewhere. By forging close ties with mainland China, the United States hopes to achieve two additional objectives: no further involvement in a land war in Asia and the strengthening of the combined forces of NATO in Europe so as to redress the growing military imbalance between NATO and Warsaw Pact forces.<sup>4</sup>

Given the fact that American policy towards Korea is a function of, as well as dependent upon, U.S. global and regional strategic interests and considering the U.S. is basically interested in maintaining the status quo on the Korean peninsula, the U.S. would not like to see any sudden change in the political configuration on the Korean peninsula. What can be anticipated from the U.S., therefore, is a policy designed to stabilize the existing status quo.



## THE SOVIET UNION'S POLICY TOWARD KOREA

Although Russia's ambition was set back due to its defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, its interest in the Korean peninsula began in the late 19th century as it started to look for a warm-water port. Since World War II, the Soviet Union has considered North Korea an important forward base for expanding its sphere of power.<sup>5</sup> Over the years, this relationship has fluctuated widely; from extremely close in the early 1950s, to an almost total break in the early 1960s, with variations between the two extremes from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. These fluctuations indicate some divergence of interests and difficulties in managing differences in their bilateral relations, as well as the mutual distrust imbedded therein. However, strategic needs, as perceived by both sides, have held the two countries together.

The USSR's interests in North Korea are primarily security concerns defined in terms of the Soviet global and regional perspective. The strengthened U.S.-Japan and U.S.-South Korean security alliances and the possibility of U.S.-Japan-China cooperation directed against the USSR have augmented the strategic importance of North Korea to the Soviets.<sup>6</sup>

The improvement in Soviet-North Korean relations has been among the most significant recent developments in Soviet policy in Asia. Between 1978 and 1984, the Soviet Union limited its military aid to North Korea to little more than supplying spare parts, but as a result of Kim Il Sung's visit

to Moscow in May 1984, followed by Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Kapitsa's visit to Pyongyang the following November, this policy changed.<sup>7</sup>

Pyongyang has now received the equivalent of at least one MIG-23 regiment and part of a second, as well as SA-3 missiles. In return, the Soviet Union has been able to conduct a rudimentary air-navy training exercise and to expand its intelligence over flights of North Korea, which until 1987 were limited to southbound flights.<sup>8</sup>

Moscow and Pyongyang also have made extensive use of joint celebrations to certify their improving relations. The ceremonies honoring the 25th anniversary of the Soviet-North Korean Mutual Assistance Treaty were highlighted by exchanges of aircraft and naval visits.

The reasons that the Soviet Union resumed military assistance to North Korea at the time when the North-South dialogue was underway are not quite clear. Obviously, the Soviet Union has been anxious to improve relations with North Korea, perhaps to offset the North's tilt toward China. The supply of modern aircraft could strengthen the North's position in the dialogue with South Korea. And improving relations between Pyongyang and Moscow may be considered necessary to prevent Moscow's exclusion from decision making on the Korean peninsula.

Because North Korea is the only ally that the Soviet Union has in East Asia, the Soviet Union cannot afford to

ignore it. Though the Soviets have failed to manipulate North Korea into becoming a pro-Soviet satellite, they have every intention of making the Korean peninsula a sphere of influence to counter U.S., Japanese, and Chinese influence in Asia. In short, Pyongyang will continue to be Moscow's most important ally in East Asia, and Moscow's role in helping Pyongyang economically and militarily will not diminish in the next decade.

#### JAPAN'S POLICY TOWARD KOREA

Japan has benefitted most from the defense efforts of Korea and the United States. Japan has been able to concentrate on economic development programs while minimizing her defense expenditures. This has made her a world economic giant. In addition, Japan has profitted in a security sense. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger once remarked that "Americans fought and died to preserve South Korea's independence," and that "our alliance with South Korea is designed to meet an external threat which affects our own security, and that of Japan as well."<sup>9</sup> Peaceful coexistence between the two Koreas has been considered very important for Japan's security in the post-Korean War period. In a number of important joint communiques issued with the United States and South Korea, Japan has repeatedly acknowledged this linkage. Such a perception has been reinforced by the continuing tension and confrontation between South and North Korea, with little prospect for rapprochement between the two Koreas in the near future.

In view of the two Koreas' uncompromising hostility toward each other and the seemingly endless arms buildup along both sides of the DMZ, Japan regards the Korean peninsula as the most dangerous trouble spot in East Asia. More than any other major power, Japan fears the renewal of conflict on the Korean peninsula, for such a conflict inevitably would draw Japan into it, either directly or indirectly, in light of the existing security arrangements with the United States. The U.S. guarantees the security of both Japan and South Korea. Because North Korea has ties with the USSR, a conflict on the Korean peninsula could even escalate into a major nuclear confrontation that could imperil Japan's own security.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, Japan's policy towards the Korean peninsula is based on two basic objectives: keeping the entire peninsula free from the domination of any one major regional power and leaving the peninsula divided. The first objective, of course, is dictated by the strategic importance of the peninsula to Japan's security. The second objective derives from the merits of the status quo on the Korean peninsula in Japanese eyes. A divided Korea has served Japan's national interest well in the post-war period. Japan believes that such a policy is not only consonant with the U.S.-Japan alliance, but also is congruent with Japan's security interest. Other alternatives, such as violent unification of Korea under communist domination or even peaceful unification under a

noncommunist regime, are not expected to serve Japan's national interest as well.<sup>11</sup> Japan accepts the reality of two Koreas and is willing to co-exist peacefully with them.

As a natural corollary of the Japanese-American alliance, Japan has maintained close ties with South Korea, while refusing to recognize North Korea except in case of the "cross recognition" of the two Koreas by four major powers. In light of the refusal of both Washington and Seoul to recognize Pyongyang except in case of cross recognition, this seems natural.

Japan will cooperate closely with the United States and South Korea in promoting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, while allowing limited private contact and economic exchanges with North Korea.

#### CHINA'S POLICY TOWARD KOREA

From the Chinese perspective, the Korean peninsula is a strategically important location. China fought the Sino-Japanese War in 1894-1895 and the Korean War in 1950-1953 over Korea. The General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, asserted during his official visit to North Korea on May 10, 1984 that "the Korean peninsula is situated in the land-sea vantage point of Northeast Asia and holds an important strategic position."<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, China shares 523 kilometers of border with North Korea, while the Soviet Union shares only 23 kilometers, and the peninsula has functioned traditionally as an area of

conflict and an invasion corridor. Therefore, the Chinese leadership perceives Korea as a strategically important factor in China's security considerations, and China's policy toward Korea has been greatly influenced by the security consideration. That is, China wishes at the minimum to keep Korea within her sphere of influence.

China's policy toward the Korean peninsula is largely a function of its overall foreign policy concerns. These, at present, are based on the following premises:

1. The Soviet Union is the main threat to China's security.

2. Despite this major threat from the Soviet Union, military conflict with the Soviet Union is unlikely in the near future.

3. China needs a fairly long period of peace in order to modernize its economy, upgrade its industrial and defense capacity, and become strong enough in the long run to defend itself in the face of external threats.

4. The United States is not a threat to China's security.

5. The principal sources of capital and technology needed to modernize China are Japan and the United States.

6. To have a good and healthy relationship, especially economic cooperation, with Japan is very important. At the same time, China would not like to see the Japanese rearm themselves rapidly. A militarily strong Japan is not in China's interests.<sup>13</sup>

This policy, in turn, requires a regional policy toward the Korean peninsula that has three basic objectives. The first of these is to maintain regional stability and the existing balance. Any development in and around the Korean peninsula that will lead to instability the Chinese regard as adverse to their interests. Considering the peninsula as an area of tension and military buildup, China hopes that tensions will be relaxed and peaceful reunification gradually realized. Second, given the strategic importance of, and the unique set of, cultural, historical, geographical, and political ties with North Korea, maintaining good relations with Pyongyang is crucial. Third, it is in China's interest that the bilateral relationship between North Korea and China be maintained in a way that will not adversely affect Beijing's relations with Washington and Tokyo. Thus, China's reasons for desiring stability in Korea are obvious. A military conflict would impose upon the Chinese an extremely serious dilemma that Beijing is neither willing nor ready to face. The combination of Beijing's pragmatic open-door economic policy and its effort to separate politics and economics in its foreign policy has led to a rapid growth in indirect trade between China and South Korea. The total value of this indirect trade was estimated to be about U.S. \$20 million in 1979, and it increased, in spite of North Korean discontent, to almost U.S. \$1 billion in 1985.<sup>14</sup>

Besides indirect trade relations, some occasions were provided for Beijing to directly contact an unrecognized regime. The Republic of Korea and China had their first official contacts in May 1983 to negotiate the repatriation of a hijacked Chinese aircraft and its passengers and crewmembers to China. A British-built Trident aircraft, belonging to the Civil Aviation Administration of China, was hijacked to Korea and made an emergency landing at an air base near Chunchon on May 5, 1983. The airliner with 105 persons aboard was hijacked to Korea by 6 Chinese nationals seeking political asylum in Taiwan.<sup>15</sup>

On March 21, 1985, a Chinese torpedo boat was rescued by a South Korean fishing vessel while drifting in Korean territorial waters subsequent to the mutiny. South Korea turned the mutinous Chinese navy torpedo boat and its entire crew, including the bodies of the six killed during the uprising, over to China seven days afterward. It was the second direct official contact between the two countries.<sup>16</sup>

Chinese sportsmen also have had some contact with their South Korean counterparts in international games. China sent a team of 389 athletes to the 10th Asian Games in Seoul in 1986, even though North Korea boycotted the games. And a Chinese official has stated that his country will send another team to the 1988 Olympic Games in Seoul.

Beijing, however, has been sensitive to Pyongyang's displeasure with Chinese contacts with Seoul, and it has made



clear that China will not contact Seoul officially. Unofficial contacts with South Korea will continue, although they will still be limited in the years ahead due to the importance of China-North Korea relations.<sup>17</sup>

The primary objective of China's regional policy is to maintain stability and reduce tension in the peninsula.

From the foregoing discussions of the strategic and economic interests of the major powers with regard to the preferred political configuration of Korea, it seems fairly clear that the basic regional policies of the major powers toward the Korean peninsula are to maintain stability and the existing balance.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHANGES IN NORTHEAST ASIAN POWER STRUCTURE

#### THE SINO-AMERICAN-JAPANESE TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP

Alignments or alliances have traditionally been a major technique in the balance of power politics pursued by states perceiving common interests. One obvious reason for alliances is that allies constitute an addition of the power of other states to one's own.

The full normalization of U.S.-China relations in 1978, immediately following the signing of the Sino-Japanese peace and friendship treaty, and continued U.S. efforts to enhance Sino-American security collaboration paved the way for a Sino-American-Japanese security connection, for the process of Sino-American rapprochement initiated in the early 1970s revealed mutual interest in improving bilateral ties not only in political and economic areas but also in security affairs.

From an American perspective, a China connection gives the United States considerable strategic flexibility in the sense that it will "no longer face a two-front security challenge from the combination of Soviet and Chinese power." The Sino-American connection also has "a positive effect on America's global position and on the Asian environment irrespective of whether the United States and China develop an active program of security cooperation."<sup>1</sup>

From a Chinese perspective, the very existence of an American connection may serve to signal to Moscow that China is no longer isolated as regards the growing Soviet military presence along the Sino-Soviet border. It also substantially reduces Beijing's longstanding fears that the United States and the Soviet Union may act collusively at China's expense.<sup>2</sup>

On the part of Japan, the security situation is somewhat different. The Soviet Union today is able to exert heavy, even intolerable, military pressure upon Japan by heightening tensions--for instance, in the Northern Kurile Chain off Hokkaido or in the SLOCs that carry Japan's energy resources and commerce. It is in this regard that Japan has always been more cautious about provoking the Soviet Union unnecessarily and, thus, has tried to maintain an "equi-distance diplomacy," not leaning too far toward China at the Soviet Union's expense.<sup>3</sup>

As things stand then, it seems to be in the interest of both the United States and Japan to promote Sino-Japanese cooperation in a manner that is not likely to arouse Soviet fears of a Sino-American-Japanese triangular security system.

Viewed against this background of the Japanese positions toward the Soviet Union and China, the key questions for a future Sino-Japanese or Sino-American-Japanese security relationship appear to be: (1) to what extent and how seriously will the Soviet Union heighten tension in East Asia and the Pacific in the future with a view to hindering the development

of Sino-Japanese cooperation; (2) in what manner and direction will Japan respond to the growing Soviet threat; and (3) how might this situation affect the policies of the United States and China.

#### THE SINO-AMERICAN-SOVIET RELATIONSHIP

China's policy toward the Korean peninsula in the 1980s should be analyzed and understood in the context of changing relations between China and the Soviet Union as well as North Korea's relations with China and the Soviet Union. The most important event of all was China's adoption in 1982 of an "independent foreign policy" which involved equi-distance between the United States and Soviet Union. Thus, a new strategic triangle between China, the United States, and the Soviet Union has emerged.

The proposal that the late Leonid Brezhnev made in March, 1982 at Tashkent for the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations provided the impetus for the reduction of tensions on the Sino-Soviet border and enhanced the process of the resumption of negotiations between Chinese and Soviet leaders for the normalization of relations. Moreover, border trade between China and the Soviet Union was stepped up in 1983 in Heilungjiang Province, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, and the Sinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Thereafter, the trade volume between the two countries expanded each year.<sup>4</sup>

The Chinese, while continuing to oppose "hegemoist" expansion, will undoubtedly do everything possible to avoid a serious exacerbation of Sino-Soviet tensions and deterioration of Sino-Soviet ties.

For its part, Moscow recognizes that heightened tensions with China will only help further expand Sino-American cooperation, while it can be only uncertain, at best, about U.S. actions in any direct Sino-Soviet confrontation. With the priority objective of driving a wedge between the United States and China and impeding the establishment of a full anti-Soviet coalition in Asia, the Soviets will similarly be likely to attempt to avoid any further deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations. For these reasons, a major deterioration of the present Sino-Soviet relationship, while certainly possible, is unlikely.

Such a course of action would reflect increased Chinese interest in establishing greater balance in its relations with the United States and the Soviet Union and allow greater Chinese latitude in defining the nature of triangular relations among China, the Soviet Union, and the United States. It would also reflect increased Soviet efforts to wean China away from the United States--to the extent that it can do so without making any fundamental concessions--and to impede the development of a full-fledged anti-Soviet alliance between the U.S., Japan, and China.<sup>5</sup>

So long as the basic-underlying competition between China and the Soviet Union continues, however, regional development will be heavily influenced by the rivalry. This seems particularly true concerning the Korean peninsula. At a minimum, neither Moscow nor Beijing will be willing to tolerate a Korea reunified under a hostile power. For this reason, each is likely to prefer continued division of the peninsula.

Beyond this, each will seek to prevent North Korea from tilting too far in the opposite direction. This will continue to limit the influence of China and the Soviet Union on Pyongyang while constraining their actions toward South Korea.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that relations among the four powers in Northeast Asia are undergoing serious realignment on the basis of a series of bilateral relations is an encouraging phenomenon from the South Korean perspective. This is an encouraging development because recent changes in Northeast Asian power structure can be construed as evidence that all four major powers in the area have now accepted the division of Korea as a fait accompli, what American foreign policy described in the early seventies as the "Koreanization of the Korean Question."

## CHAPTER V

### THE NORTH-SOUTH CONFRONTATION AND MILITARY BALANCE

#### PERCEPTION OF THE STATE OF THE INTER-KOREAN RELATIONSHIP AND PROBLEMS

Spatially, the 38th parallel was the demarcation line chosen on August 15, 1945 to divide the Korean nation into two sectors. In a temporal sense, it was a barrier that subsequently created two separate histories for the one nation.

Entry into the orbit of international communism transformed the northern half into a society with one of the strictest control systems ever imposed upon a people. Having inherited the mantle of national legitimacy, the southern half, in contrast, developed an open society founded upon the ideals of democracy.

These differences in the political system and other characteristics between the two Koreas are striking indeed, but South and North Korea have not on that account pursued entirely separate paths of development. On the contrary, both sides have maintained a strong will toward integration. Consequently, their interaction has been strongly affected by an acute awareness of each other's existence. At the same time, this perception of the other side as an entity that cannot simply be ignored has created a dilemma for both Koreas. That is, both sides have had to declare the existence of a single Korea when it was painfully clear that they were locked into a state of continuing division and conflict.<sup>1</sup>

From a strictly legal standpoint, the South-North Korean relationship is neither one between two independent states, nor that of a single state composed of multiple parts. There are the Republic of Korea, which exercises exclusive, independent control over the territory and people of the southern half, and the Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea, which does the same in the northern half. The South and the North, moreover, behave as separate actors toward the outside world and are recognized as such. Thus, one cannot from this standpoint fail to view them as two independent countries.

However, each of the two Koreas is reluctant to look upon the other as a foreign country. There are constitutional requirements in both South and North that the two sides compete in representing a single territory and people. Article 3 of the South Korean constitution clearly states that "its territory consists of the Korean peninsula and the surrounding islands." Though the northern constitution does not contain a statement on territory, its Article 5 differentiates the "northern half" from the "entire national sphere," thus implying that the "entire nation" refers to an entity encompassing both South and North Korea. Such constitutional stipulations can be seen to imply that each side views the other as an illegal entity. In this legal sense, a commonality exists between the two Koreas in treating each other negatively and exclusively.



In terms of political perception, however, there exists no such common understanding. Rather, a wide chasm exists. South Korea's perspective on unification and its relationship with the North is based on the "doctrine of one nation with two systems."<sup>2</sup> While not neglecting the historical background leading to the nation's division, this doctrine recognizes the reality of the division as well as the existence of two governments, each with its own territory and people.

South Korea's efforts to perceive the North as a de facto independent state and to reformulate South-North relations are said to have begun on August 15, 1970, when President Chung Hee Park proposed "competition in good faith between the systems of the South and North" in his National Independence Day address.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent "7.4 South-North Joint Communique" (July 4, 1972) and "6.23 Declaration" (June 23, 1973) also had the effect of recognizing North Korea as a separate country.

South Korea's posture in the 1980s toward the South-North relationship can be characterized as more positive than that of the 1970s. South Korea continues to view North Korea as a quasi-independent state, but South Korea has expressed a stronger will toward unification, with a series of concrete proposals and reminders. It also emphasizes that North Korea is a special state whose residents are a part of the Korean people and that the northern half is a target of eventual unification. Nevertheless, South Korea's definition of

inter-Korean relationship as one between a single people divided between two countries can be deduced from its use of the following terms: "special state," "summit talk," "competition between the systems," and the "doctrine of one nation with two systems."

What is North Korea's perspective on the relationship between the two Koreas? Simply put, North Korea does not view the South-North relationship as one between two countries but as one requiring continuing struggle and eventual liberation. Even though the division of Korea was, in fact, an act of political expediency for both the U.S. and Soviet Union, North Korea claims that the U.S. imperialists" merely took over the southern half from the "Japanese imperialists." Thus, it defines unification as "the liberation of the people through a struggle against imperialism" and as "a class struggle between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries."<sup>4</sup>

As long as North Korea refuses to accept the reality of Korea's division, treats South Korea as a target for "liberation" and "struggle," and defines South-North Korean relations based on this logic, it cannot help but prefer a "revolution in South Korea" to inter-Korean dialogue and a unification strategy based on force rather than through peaceful means. Herein lies the root cause of its policies on bilateral relations and on unification.

It appears that the following considerations constitute the major stumbling blocks to improvement in South-North

Korean relations. The first obstacle arises from the socio-psychological makeup of the two societies. Between South and North Korea still exists a strong sense of animosity and distrust stemming from the experience of the Korean War.<sup>5</sup> The second obstacle is the internal political situation in North Korea. It is well known that the North abruptly halted the bilateral talks of the 1970s as it reoriented its policies to streamline its domestic system.<sup>6</sup> The third obstacle is that the international environment is not ready for the support and promotion of a positive turn in inter-Korean relations. Considering that the two Koreas are weaker than the major powers surrounding them and that international politics is in essence one of power struggle, it will be difficult to expect unification or changes in inter-Korean relations without the consent of the major powers.<sup>7</sup>

#### THE MILITARY BALANCE AND THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA

It was some thirty years ago that the fighting in the Korean War was halted by a military armistice. However, peace in a real sense has yet to be established on the Korean peninsula. Because of the threat posed by North Korea's communist forces, a state of elevated tension continues. In an area covering only some 80,000 square miles, a total of 1.4 million troops of the opposing regular forces of the South and North are confronting each other along a 155-mile military demarcation line (DMZ). Such a high degree of military concentration

makes the peninsula one of the most conspicuous spots of potential armed conflict in the world.

Even though the presence of American troops gives South Korea important military advantages, North Korea today could launch a massive attack with minimal warning.<sup>8</sup> The redeployment of North Korean forces that has been taking place has given the North an increased offensive capability. Over a two-year period, the concentration of its forces on the border went up from 45 percent to around 65 percent. Armored forces have been moved forward, and some towed artillery has been replaced with self-propelled guns. The Soviet Union has recently supplied new air defense missiles and is to supply ground-to-ground missiles that could hit Seoul, plus MIG-23 fighters. The result of this redeployment is, of course, to give the North a capacity to attack with much less warning--perhaps only a matter of hours.<sup>9</sup>

North Korea is concentrating its efforts on the modernization and expansion of armaments in accordance with the four major military guidelines that it adopted in the early 1960s. These call for (1) arming the entire people; (2) fortifying the entire country; (3) "cadre-izing" through political indoctrination all members of the armed forces; the objective is for every soldier to possess "leadership capability" in the event of mobilization; and (4) modernizing military equipment.<sup>10</sup>

North Korea's military potential centers around a ground force of some 800,000 troops in 32 divisions with about 2,900 tanks. Air power consists of some 840 combat aircraft, including some 40 MIG-23s. Naval forces include guided missile patrol boats, torpedo boats, amphibious assault crafts, and submarines (see Table 1).

North Korea has developed the largest special operations forces in the world, also possesses powerful reserve forces centered around the Red Worker-Peasant Militia which are constantly maintained at a high state of preparedness so as to be quickly and efficiently transformed into regular forces.<sup>11</sup>

South Korea is strengthening its defense capabilities against a background of high economic growth. Its ground forces total some 560,000 troops in 23 divisions with some 1,300 tanks. Air power includes about 480 combat aircraft. And South Korea maintains naval forces equipped with destroyers, missile ships, and a few submarines.

Thus, the North is superior in armor and air strength, mainly tanks and fighter aircraft. In addition to regular divisions, the North maintains the Red Worker-Peasant Militia in a state of readiness so that it can be immediately employed in combat. North Korea has the advantage of border contiguity with both the Soviet Union and China, and is said to be further strengthening the survivability of its military facilities.

TABLE 1. MILITARY POWER COMPARISON  
(as of 1986)

	<u>SOUTH KOREA</u>	<u>NORTH KOREA</u>
GDP	\$98.15 bn	\$42.45 bn
Defense Budget	\$ 5.11 bn	\$ 4.45 bn
Population	42,126,000	21,153,000
Total Armed Forces		
Active	629,000	838,000
Reserves	4,840,000	5,000,000
Army		
Manpower	542,000	750,000
Division	21	32
Tank	1,300	2,900
Artillery	3,300	6,000
Navy		
Manpower	29,000	35,000
Submarine	1	27
Destroyer	9	-
Frigates	6	2
Others	113	372
Air Force		
Manpower	33,000	53,000
Combat aircraft	476	840
Special Operation Force	7 brigades	25 brigades (112,000)

(Source: International Institute for Strategic Study, The Military Balance 1987-1988 (London, 1987))

The additional geographical disadvantage of South Korea is the location of its capital city Seoul. This falls within range of North Korean SSMS. North Korea's capital of Pyongyang, in contrast, is located well north of any direct firepower threat from the DMZ.

North Korea's military buildup with hostile attitude toward South Korea has been a crucial factor in the continued tension and precarious stability in the peninsula. The presence of U.S. forces in Korea has played a key role in deterring North Korean aggression. North Korea's military modernization, reorganization, and repositioning of forces nearer the DMZ has seriously reduced attack warning time for South Korean forces. The success of deterrence and defense of Korea is primarily dependent on South Korea's self-defense efforts. However, outside factors are also very significant, such as the strategies of Moscow and Beijing as well as the U.S. and Japan towards the Korean peninsula, must be considered.

There has been close interaction among the alliances of the U.S.-ROK, the Soviet Union-North Korea, and the PRC-North Korea. In these interactions, the two Koreas have functioned in a crucial way, over and above their positions as minor powers, in maintaining the balance among the alliances.

This web of interaction among the alliances has given the DPRK increased maneuverability between the Soviet Union and the PRC. Moreover, the close interaction among all three

alliances has elevated North Korea's position in the balancing process. U.S.-Soviet detente made North Korea even more vital to the PRC; the emergence of a U.S.-China-Japan trilateral entente made North Korea invaluable to the Soviet Union. North Korea's position to tilt either toward the Soviet Union or China would significantly affect the balance of relations in Korea.

The position of the ROK in the balance among the three alliances has been as vital as that of North Korea. The U.S.-ROK alliance is obviously indispensable for the balance in the region. Furthermore, the position of the ROK has also become important for the Soviet Union when the Soviet Union attempts to make a countermove, as it did in the early 1970s and was reportedly trying to do again in 1982, against the China-North Korean alignment.<sup>12</sup> At the same time, the ROK's position is as important to the PRC as it is to the Soviet Union, especially when the PRC moves to react against the Soviet-North Korea alignment. The increasing contact between the ROK and the PRC in recent years is an important factor not only for its balancing effects against the Soviet-North Korean alignment, but also for increasing contact between North Korea and Japan. The ROK's position with respect to both of these alliances and in the four power balance has been elevated so that it is a major factor in the balancing process in this pattern.



Because of the enhanced importance of the positions of the two Koreas, the reduction of tension and conflict between them has become an even more crucial condition for the stability in this system of relationships. The policy of the major powers--the U.S., the Soviet Union, China, and Japan--toward the Korean peninsula is to maintain regional stability and the existing balance. Any development in and around the Korean peninsula that will lead to instability will be regarded as adverse to the interests of the major powers.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Some 1.4 million troops face each other across a line in Korea today. And as soon as one side develops or procures new modern weaponry, the other side immediately follows suit in the name of deterrence. North Korea invests more than 20 percent of its GNP in military outlays. South Korea puts about 5 percent of its GNP into military preparedness. Even at this level, neither side possesses a "second strike" capability, and the arms race continues apace.

The amount of military expenditures, to be sure, could for a while exceed the normal level of national capabilities, but such anomalies cannot last for an extended period of time. In view of the 40 years of military confrontation, therefore, it would not be unreasonable to say that North Korea's militaristic posture is approaching its limit. In terms of the size of GNP, South Korea bested North Korea by 5.2:1 in 1983. It is estimated that by the year 2000, the ratio will widen to 7:1. In the military investment sector, the disparity is expected to become 1.5 times in South Korea's favor by the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

In view of the size of the national economy and the levels of industrial and technological advancement, North Korea is likely to lag far behind South Korea as time progresses. Consequently, North Korea may seek to overcome its

military inferiority vis-a-vis the South or otherwise take extreme measures to turn the table on the South before the disparity widens irrevocably. South Koreans see a high probability for the latter event taking place.

North Korea still has armed forces that far exceed those of the South in quantity, are newly strengthened by additional Soviet weapons, and are in the hands of a government whose aggressive demeanor and tendency to act unexpectedly is well known. Therefore, a U.S. military presence in the Republic of Korea is of importance, both for regional stability and for local security, which is essential to South Korea's remarkable economic development.<sup>2</sup>

Possible changes in the international environment surrounding the Korean peninsula appear favorable to inter-Korean relations during the next five to ten years. The bases of such a projection include the following:

1. In terms of the Korean peninsula, one can argue that the new U.S.-Soviet detente will have some stabilizing effect on South-North Korean relations if the U.S. continues to uphold its traditional defense commitment to South Korea and the U.S. takes countermeasures against the increasing Soviet military buildup in the North Pacific.

2. The four major powers converged to one common interest that the maintenance of the status quo in the Korean peninsula was the most preferable and beneficial to all of the major powers.

3. The continued increase in China-South Korea exchanges and the reopening of Soviet-South Korean relations will inevitably bring forth a concomitant improvement of relations between North Korea and the U.S. as well as between North Korea and Japan.

South Korea's ultimate goal is national unification, while its intermediate goal is the peace and stability of the Korean peninsula. South Korea's efforts toward "cross recognition" and "joint entry" into the United Nations are all geared toward these two goals; one can point out that overall international atmosphere has been developing in this direction.

It is widely expected that by the end of the current decade South Korea will overtake North Korea in almost all areas, and by the early nineties South Korea, if necessary, could possess the capability to threaten North Korea on its own. At this juncture, therefore, South Korea should be prepared to review its own policies and processes that have been in place since the cold war era.

To encourage an opening of North Korea, South Korea should take more positive steps toward creating a favorable international atmosphere for national unification. Seeking the diplomatic support of the U.S. and Japan in our efforts to improve relations with China and the Soviet Union is nothing more than a means toward a larger goal. Consequently, South Korea should begin to think and act in terms of U.S.

or Japanese approaches toward the Korean question, i.e., to embrace a broader and longer perspective. South Korea should be content with the U.S. and Japan checkmating China and the Soviet Union in terms of international influence over the Korean question.

South Korea's perspective on unification and its relationship with the North is based on "doctrine of one nation with two systems." The reestablishment of South-North relations on the basis of reality will provide a new momentum toward a solution of many pending problems, including the negotiation of a nonaggression pact and "peace treaty" as well as arms reduction.

To be sure, none of the processes promise to be simple or easy. On the contrary, it is quite possible that both Koreas will engage in stepped up competition for legitimacy, and North Korea's efforts to secure compensation in advance will complicate the problems.

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